

Bruce Hornsby and yMusic Present BrhyM Thursday, March 7, 2024, at 7:30pm Foellinger Great Hall

PROGRAM Bruce Hornsby and yMusic Present BrhyM

BrhyM is the new collaboration between Bruce Hornsby and the genre-leading American chamber ensemble yMusic. Following a five-concert tour in early 2020, Bruce and the ensemble, comprised of Alex Sopp, flute; Hideaki Aomori, clarinets; CJ Camerieri, trumpet; Rob Moose, violin; Nadia Sirota, viola; and Gabriel Cabezas, cello, decided to keep the musical conversation going remotely during the pandemic and thus, BrhyM, was born.

Each ticket purchased to this performance will include a copy of *Deep Sea Vents*, the new collaborative album from BrhyM, on CD. *Deep Sea Vents* CDs will be distributed to patrons upon entry at the performance.

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PROFILES



Based out of Williamsburg, Virginia, Bruce Hornsby first rose to national prominence with The Way It Is, his 1986 Grammywinning debut album with The Range. The title track became the most-played song on American radio in 1987, while Tupac Shakur's timeless song "Changes" builds on "The Way It Is" and set the stage

for many subsequent versions of the track. In 1991 Hornsby collaborated with Bonnie Raitt, playing on her iconic hit "I Can't Make You Love Me." Additionally, Hornsby was a part-time member of the Grateful Dead from September 1990 to March 1992, performing over 100 concerts in America and Europe. The 13-time Grammy nominee has also solidified his status as a highly sought-after collaborator. Hornsby's own 23 albums have sold over 11 million copies worldwide, and he has appeared on over 100 records including releases with Bob Dylan, Don Henley, the Grateful Dead, Stevie Nicks, Ricky Skaggs, Bob Seger, Chaka Khan, Bon Iver, Brandon Flowers, Bonnie Raitt, Sting, Mavis Staples, Willie Nelson and more. His most recent studio album, 'Flicted, was released this past May.



Founded in New York City in 2008, yMusic (Alex Sopp, flutes/voice; Hideaki Aomori, clarinets; CJ Camerieri, trumpet/horn; Rob Moose, violin; Nadia Sirota, viola; Gabriel Cabezas, cello believes in presenting excellent, emotionally communicative music, regardless of style or idiom. Their virtuosic execution and unique configuration have attracted the attention of high profile collaborators-from Paul Simon to Bill T. Jones to Ben Folds—and inspired original works by some of today's foremost composers, including Andrew Norman, Caroline Shaw, Nico Muhly, Missy Mazzoli, Marcos Balter, Judd Greenstein, and Gabriella Smith. They have performed around the world in venues of all sizes, including the Sydney Opera House, Carnegie Hall, the Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, and Madison Square Garden.

In 2023, they released an eponymous album of self-composed works. yMusic has previously released four full-length albums of commissioned music: 2020's Ecstatic Science; 2017's First; 2014's Balance Problems; and 2011's Beautiful Mechanical, Time Out New York's "#1 Classical Record of the Year." Outside of the classical genre, yMusic has collaborated in the studio and on stage with dozens of popular artists, including Ben Folds, Emily King, Jose Gonzales, ANOHNI, Dirty Projectors, John Legend, Son Lux, the Staves, Bruce Hornsby, and Paul Simon.

ABOUT DEEP SEA VENTS

CJ Camerieri had never seen anyone enjoy live music the way Bruce Hornsby did. At the expansive Eaux Claires Festival in the summer of 2016, yMusic, cofounded by trumpeter Camerieri a decade earlier, was in the midst of premiering a program with English folk trio The Staves. Camerieri glanced to the side of the stage and spotted a basketball-tall man in sweatpants, bouncing around and beaming to what was being played feet away: Hornsby, of course. After the set, he raved to the combined ensembles, inviting them to his own Virginia festival. A collaboration on Hornsby's 2019 album, *Absolute Zero*, followed, as did a short spate of shows in the early days of soon-to-be-doomed March 2020.

For those five dates, yMusic's other cofounder, violinist Rob Moose, hatched an idea: What if they wrote a song together and offered it up every night, the unexpected and previously unheard encore? And so, "Deep Sea Vents"—an almost-vaudeville prance, with horns splashing and bass diving, a musical simulacrum of the teeming underwater world Hornsby delightfully described—was born. Every night, the song became a cumulative joy, like a triumphant showtune from an aquatic musical that didn't exist.

"Deep Sea Vents" is now the finale and title track of a spirited full-length collaboration between Hornsby and yMusic (**BrhyM**, you can call them), built with the same enthusiasm and openness that both parties spotted in one another on that steamy day eight years ago. An album of 10 songs about water and the ways we live with, in, or against it, *Deep Sea Vents* is Hornsby and yMusic as you have never heard them but also instantly identifiable in their own ways. His instant melodic ease joins their rhythmic precision and endless versatility, pulling each toward new currents. Together, they turn the various states of water into a metaphor for a difficult first date over drinks during "Phase Change," Hornsby's piano climbing the ladder of yMusic's pizzicato plucks and woodwind smears. And in their hands, the existential anxiety of exploration becomes a funky strut stuck somewhere between triphop and Ligeti for "Deep Blue," with Hornsby on electric sitar. Just as the ocean reminds us of how much we have to learn about our world, *Deep Sea Vents* reflects just how limitless musicians in one another's mutual thrall can be.

Several months after the pandemic scuttled all future plans, Moose again asked Hornsby if he might be interested in writing more songs with yMusic. Sequestered in his Virginia studio, Hornsby readily accepted. yMusic began dispatching pieces to him, only to be stunned by how quickly he would respond with finished songs, rising to meet even their most abstract ideas with inexhaustible élan. The dipping horns and slashing strings of one offering became the prompt for a quasi-rap, Hornsby detailing the life and eccentricity of the egg-laying mammal on "Platypus Wow." During another, wispy dissonance yielded suddenly to devilish strings and shouting horns, as though some faction of an orchestra had rebelled against sonority; for Hornsby, it became "Barber Booty," a madcap advertisement for pirate escapades. Much to yMusic's surprise, Hornsby changed very little about their songs but instead found ways to situate himself inside them, for his hooks to become the anchors of their instrumentals and then respond, more or less, with a what-else-yagot gusto.

Every song on *Deep Sea Vents* betrays this same sense of wonder, musically and conceptually.

Neither Hornsby nor yMusic set out to write a record about a world of water, but Hornsby simply found that's where his adult curiosity about science and most everything else happened to lead him. Finally reading *Moby-Dick*, for instance, he was shocked by Herman Melville's humor, so he lends that delight to opener "The Wild Whaling Life," his dulcimer lifting a refrain that works as a proclamation of pride.

"The Wake of St. Brendan" stemmed from The New York Times' obituary of Tim Severin, a sailor who re-created the arduous journeys of early explorers. His voice warped by electronics and teased by strings, Hornsby sings a hymn not just for Severin but for anyone who's found an unorthodox way of existing, of following an obsession to the very ends of the earth. And the gorgeous but heartbreaking "Foreign Sounds" finds Hornsby picking up the croon of George Jones to share the perspective of a clownfish, lost at sea because of the underwater noise pollution that is currently wrecking ecosystems. The song comes from Hornsby's rapacious reading, but it is much more than an academic exercise; it is, instead, a true ballad for the blighted, the heartsick, and the stranded.

Early into Deep Sea Vents, during "(My) Theory of Everything," Hornsby adds meaty chords to yMusic's delicate string whorls and sputtering horn lines. He steadily relays the story of a scientist in a nearby aquatic research lab, checking for pollution and analyzing data to do his job. "I love marine research, saving estuaries," Hornsby sings, a slight wink in his delivery. As this anonymous expert goes about his day, he's also developing his theory of everything in secret, building a unified framework for how the world really works.

It is a reminder of the depth that people, like the ocean, ferry beneath the surface. That is, it's sort

of like the pianist with some decades-old radio hits singing strangely beguiling and empathetic songs about sea life and the lives we make there with an esteemed new music ensemble—the one, that is, that kept offering up invitations to play because they recognized a kindred spirit when they saw one, bouncing along there on the side of the stage.

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The University of Illinois System carries out its mission in its namesake state, which includes the traditional territory of the Peoria, Kaskaskia, Piankashaw, Wea, Miami, Mascoutin, Odawa, Sauk, Mesquaki, Kickapoo, Potawatomi, Ojibwe, Menominee, Ho-Chunk, and Chickasaw Nations. These lands continue to carry the stories of these Nations and their struggles for survival and identity.

As a land-grant institution, the University of Illinois has a particular responsibility to acknowledge the peoples of these lands, as well as the histories of dispossession that have allowed for the growth of this institution. We are also obligated to reflect on and actively address these histories and the role that this university has played in shaping them. This acknowledgment and the centering of Native peoples is a start as we move forward.

Krannert Center affirms the commitment by the university to move beyond these statements, toward building deeper relationships and taking actions that uphold and preserve Indigenous rights and cultural equity.

As we gather to experience this performance, we have an opportunity to reflect on the ways that systems of oppression have shaped our society. We can work together to create systems that support human dignity, establish equity, strengthen cross-cultural relationships, and draw upon the creative capacity of all people that make up this community, state, nation, and world.

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