

## **Crash Ensemble celebrates the music of Phill Niblock. With special guests Trio Scordatura and Susan Stenger.**

Ahead of their forthcoming concerts in Australia and NYC, Crash Ensemble is delighted to welcome the visionary composer, photographer and filmmaker Phill Niblock to Dublin for a special portrait event. Taking place over three floors in the Temple Bar Galleries and including installations of his visual work, this event is a rare opportunity to experience this unique creative voice. Often considered the ‘forgotten’ minimalist, Niblock’s influence has nonetheless made him a cult figure of the new music world where his work continues to inspire a generation.

His music is described as a layering of close-ratio tones played at volume to produce a multitude of overtone patterns:

*“I’m more interested in making architectural, environmental sound pieces, which one can think of as a big, full box. Within that box, there are many possibilities of things happening, so if you move around the space, the sound changes because of the standing waves. All of the pieces work with that kind of thing, and I vary the structure of the pitches I use from piece to piece. I’m not interested in a tuning structure but more of an architectural structure to create this environment.”* – Phill Niblock

Niblock began his artistic career when he moved to New York city as a photographer, particularly of jazz musicians in the 1950s. During that time the lines were increasingly blurring between the experimental downtown music scene and the more academic uptown scene. Niblock cites seeing John Cage, Morton Feldman and La Monte Young as defining moments where he began to engage with the visual and experimental arts. Since 1968 when he presented his first concert in his own loft (where he has had over 1000 concerts since) he has remained one of the most important multi-media artists of our time.

Crash Ensemble is delighted to welcome Susan Stenger and Trio Scordatura for this very special concert.

**Programme:** Hurdy Hurry  
Sweet Potato  
G2-44  
Tow by Tom  
PK & SLS  
Disseminate

**Temple Bar Galleries, Dublin 2.**

**April 23, 2008.**

**Pre-concert talk with Bob Gilmore and Phil Niblock – 7pm**

**Concert – 7:30pm**

**Tickets €20/18 (concessions) [www.ctb.ie](http://www.ctb.ie) / Tel:0818 205 205**

**For more information on Crash Ensemble contact:**

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## *Crash Ensemble is supported by The Arts Council*

### Phill Niblock

Phill Niblock is a New York-based minimalist composer and multi-media musician and director of Experimental Intermedia, a foundation born in the flames of 1968's barricade-hopping. He has been a maverick presence on the fringes of the avant garde ever since. His influence has had more impact on younger composers such as Susan Stenger, Lois V Vierk, David First, and Glenn Branca. Niblock constructs big 24-track digitally-processed monolithic microtonal drones. The result is sound without melody or rhythm. Movement is slow, geologically slow. Changes are almost imperceptible, and his music has a tendency of creeping up on you. The vocal pieces are like some of Ligeti's choral works, but a little more phased. And this isn't choral work. "A Y U (as yet untitled)" is sampled from just one voice, the baritone Thomas Buckner. The results are pitch shifted and processed intense drones, one live and one studio edited. Unlike Ligeti, this isn't just for voice or hurdy gurdy. Like Stockhausen's electronic pieces, *Musique Concrete*, or even Fripp and Eno's *No Pussyfooting*, the role of the producer/composer in "Hurdy Hurry" and "A Y U" is just as important as the role of the performer. He says: "What I am doing with my music is to produce something without rhythm or melody, by using many microtones that cause movements very, very slowly." The stills in the booklet are from slides taken in China, while Niblock was making films which are painstaking studies of manual labour, giving a poetic dignity to sheer gruelling slog of fishermen at work, rice-planters, log-splitters, water-hole dredgers and other back-breaking toilers. Since 1968 Phill has also put on over 1000 concerts in his loft space, including Ryoji Ikeda, Zbigniew Karkowski, Jim O'Rourke.

### Susan Stenger

Susan Stenger has bridged the rock and art music worlds throughout her career. She grew up in Buffalo, New York, where she both played in bands and explored new music as a student of Petr Kotik and Julius Eastman. She skipped her high school graduation to attend the now legendary "New Music In New Hampshire" summer workshop in Chocorua, NH, where she first encountered the music of faculty members David Tudor, David Behrman, Gordon Mumma and Frederick Rzewski in what was a life-changing experience. After studying classical flute at the Prague Academy Of Music, she returned to New York to continue her flute work with Samuel Baron and to devote herself to the performance of new and experimental music, especially that of John Cage, Petr Kotik, Phill Niblock, Christian Wolff and Jackson Mac Low. As a member of Kotik's New York City-based SEM Ensemble, she participated in major performances and recordings of Cage's *SongBooks*, *Concert For Piano and Orchestra* and *Atlas Eclipticalis*. Stenger eventually began composing and performing her own music for flute and electronics and, in 1986, took up the electric guitar. She soon began touring with Rhys Chatham's influential, overtone-drenched guitar army, which had served as boot camp for many a NY art rocker, including members of Sonic Youth and Swans. In 1987, Stenger joined long-time friend and fellow Chathamite Robert Poss in forming *Band Of Susans*, which combined wall-of-guitar minimalism and visceral punk punch into artful song structures.

Her role expanded from electric bassist to singer and songwriter as BOS went on to release nine critically acclaimed CDs during the next decade. In 1996 Stenger moved to London and formed *The Brood*, a unique gathering of musicians from the fields of rock, electronics and improvisation with a common interest in classic experimental music. Performers have included Finnish electronicists Pan Sonic, Justine Frischmann of *Elastica*, Bruce Gilbert and Robert Grey of *Wire*, David Thomas of *Pere Ubu*, Robin Rimbaud (Scanner), and composer/bassist Gavin Bryars. *Big Bottom* was formed in 1997 when Stenger recruited visual artists Angela Bulloch, Cerith Wyn Evans and Tom Gidley, as well as bassist J. Mitch Flacko, to join her in what *Art Monthly* has described as a serious performance-art endeavour "carried along by a dash of the idiocy of *Spinal Tap*." In addition to her own work, Stenger continues to perform the music of other composers on flute, guitar and bass, most recently that of F. M. Einheit in *Paradise Lost And Found*, a 2004 production at Munich's *Haus Der Kunst* based on Milton's *Paradise Lost*. She has also toured America with *The Creatures* and John Cale and for three years performed regularly as a bassist with Nick Cave in a band that also included Jim White and Warren Ellis of the *Dirty Three*.

### Trio Scordatura

Trio Scordatura (Elizabeth Smalt: viola, Adapted Viola, viola d'amore/ Alfrun Schmid: voice / Bob Gilmore: keyboard, electronics) is an Amsterdam-based ensemble that specialises in vocal and instrumental music involving microtonal tunings and spanning a broad range of musical styles. The basic sound-world of female voice, viola and keyboard is expanded by other sonorities depending on musical context. Their concerts feature "classics" from the worlds of microtonal and spectral music, together with new commissions from a wide range of contemporary composers and sound artists.

Trio Scordatura grew initially from a project to perform the works for intoning voice, Adapted Viola and Chromelodeon by the American composer Harry Partch. This music, composed in the early 1930s, involves voice and two instruments - a viola and a harmonium - that were adapted by Partch in order to play music in his elaborate microtonal scale with more than forty unequal divisions of the octave. Trio Scordatura uses an exact copy of Partch's Adapted Viola authorised by the Harry Partch Foundation, one of only a very few such instruments in Europe. Besides performing the early works of Partch Trio Scordatura has formed close working relationships with a number of leading contemporary composers, among them Horatiu Radulescu, Phill Niblock, Alvin Lucier, François-Bernard Mâche and Lasse Thoresen. The trio has performed at the Sonorities Festival, Belfast, UK Microfest 2 in Surrey, the KlankKleurFestival in Amsterdam, *Musica Sacra* Maastricht, *Roulette* in New York, the Logos Foundation in Ghent, and gives regular performances at the Karnatic Lab series in Amsterdam.