

NEWS

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WALKER ART CENTER PRESENTS AVANT-GUITAR GOD DAVID TORN'S ALL-STAR PREZENS QUARTET AND DREW GRESS' 7 BLACK BUTTERFLIES

"Mr. Torn's quartet is committed to a dark, eruptive, oceanic sound . . . propelling a transit from panic to trance." —*The New York Sun*



Prezents Quartet (l to r): Tim Berne, Craig Taborn, Tom Rainey, David Torn
 Photo © Robert Lewis/ECM Records

Minneapolis, March 7, 2008—Avant-guitar god David Torn's all-star quartet strikes the perfect balance between jazz and electronic, elemental and explosive, free and form. Rounding out the exhilarating live combustion in the Walker Art Center's William and Nadine McGuire Theater on Friday, March 28, at 8 pm, are Tim Berne (alto sax); Minneapolis native Craig Taborn (Rhodes, B3, mellotron, bent circuits); and Tom Rainey (drums)—all respected new jazz iconoclasts from New York's Downtown school. Berne, Taborn, and Rainey pull double-duty for the evening, supporting bassist Drew Gress and astonishing trumpeter Ralph Alessi in the opening quintet, 7 Black Butterflies.

David Torn (guitar)

David Torn is a texturalist/guitarist (winner of *Guitar Player Magazine's* Readers' Poll Award, Experimental category: 1994 and 1997), composer, multi-instrumentalist (live looping, oud, saz, kikuyae, kotar, MacOS, samplers, programming, mandolin, optigan, etc.), producer, writer, occasional singer and sporadically vociferous consultant to technological niches within the musical instrument manufacturing community, among other things.



David Torn
 Photo: Scott Friedlander

Torn has often been featured as the primary texturalist and/or soloist on films scored by composers Carter Burwell, Mark Isham, Ryuichi Sakamoto, Lisa Gerrard, Patrick O'Hearn, Michael Shrieve, Graeme Revell, Michael Whalen, and Edward Shearmur. In addition, he's begun to be the principal composer of film scores. Torn's first major soundtrack as sole composer was *The Order*, directed by Brian Helgeland and starring Heath Ledger and Shannyn Sossamon in 2003.



Tim Berne
Photo: Peter Gannushkin

Tim Berne (alto saxophone)

Tim Berne (born 1954) is an American jazz saxophone player and composer whose interest in playing a musical instrument began in college when he purchased an alto saxophone. His love for rhythm and blues music (Stax records releases and Aretha Franklin) expanded to include jazz when he heard Julius Hemphill's 1972 recording *Dogon A.D.* Hemphill was known for his integration of soul music and funk with free jazz. Berne moved to New York City in 1974 to take lessons from Hemphill, with whom he later recorded.

In 1979, Berne founded Empire Records to release his own recordings. He recorded *Fulton Street Maul* and *Sanctified Dreams* for Columbia Records, which generated some discussion and controversy, due in part to the fact that Berne's music had little in common with the neo-traditionalist hard bop performers prominent in the mid-1980s. Some regarded Berne's music as uncommercial. In the late 1990s Berne founded Screwgun Records, which has released his and others' recordings.

Beyond his recordings as a bandleader, Berne has recorded and/or performed with guitarist Bill Frisell, avant-garde composer/sax player John Zorn, violinist Mat Maneri, guitarist David Torn, trumpet player Herb Robertson, and as a member of the cooperative trio Miniature (group).

Recent years have found Berne performing in several different groups with drummer Tom Rainey, keyboardist Craig Taborn, bassists Michael Formanek and Drew Gress, guitarists Marc Ducret and David Torn, and reeds player Chris Speed.

Berne's complex, multisection compositions often run 20 to 30 minutes. One critic has written that these longer pieces "don't grow tiresome. The musicians are brilliantly creative and experienced enough not to get lost in all the room provided by these large time frames."



Craig Taborn
Photo: Claudio Casanova

Craig Taborn (Fender Rhodes, Hammond B3, mellotron, bent circuits)

Craig Taborn began his musical studies at a young age and continued his jazz and composition education privately while enrolled in college. During this time he was able to pursue collaborations in the Detroit area and learn from such area stalwarts as Marcus Belgrave, Francisco Mora, Wendell Harrison, and A. Spencer Barefield. After finishing his studies, Taborn moved to Brooklyn as a member of the celebrated James Carter Quartet. He has also worked alongside other notable musicians, including Lester Bowie, Dave Holland, and The Art Ensemble of Chicago.

Tom Rainey (drums)

Tom Rainey has been the drummer of choice for a range of renowned creative artists from the relatively straight-ahead to the uncompromisingly avant, including Kenny Werner, Jane Ira Bloom, Fred Hersch, Mark Helias, Brad Shepik, Tony Malaby, Angelica Sanchez, Nels Cline, Andrea Parkins, and Tim Berne. Rainey's voluminous recording credits and the artistic caliber of the musicians he's supported would easily place him on the A-list

of drummers closely identified with the New York City modern creative jazz scene roughly from the late '80s onward, including Gerry Hemingway, Joey Baron, Bobby Previte, John Hollenbeck, Kenny Wollesen, and Jim Black.



Tom Rainey
Photo: Peter Gannushkin

A native Californian who grew up in Santa Barbara, Rainey moved to New York City via Berkley (and after returning to California and living in San Francisco for a while) in 1979 while in his early 20s. As a new resident of Brooklyn, he performed straight-ahead jazz gigs in the early '80s, plus a bit of free jazz experimenting, and in the early to mid-'80s met and began playing with saxophonist Berne. At least on recordings, however, Berne's drummers of choice during that time and into the 1990s were Paul Motian, Alex Cline, Previte, and Black, with Rainey not turning up on a disc with Berne until Big Satan's *I Think They Liked It Honey*, recorded live in Paris in 1996. But in the interim, Rainey made a lasting impression on discs by Werner, Bloom, Hersch, Helias, Tom Varner, Ray Anderson, Andy Laster, and others, before live and studio dates with Berne began taking up a larger portion of his schedule. On many of these recordings—including the Paraphrase trio with Berne on saxophones—Rainey is paired with bassist Drew Gress, and it is hard to imagine a more single-minded rhythm section duo in all of modern creative jazz.

It is with Berne that Rainey has forged perhaps his closest musical partnership, and on whose discs the drummer can be heard to best advantage. In Berne's Science Friction and Hard Cell bands, Berne has found in Rainey and in keyboardist Craig Taborn two musicians who easily pick up the thematic threads and fragments scattered through the saxophonist's often lengthy compositional/improvisational hybrids.

Those interested in investigating Rainey's recorded output might be advised to look for anything with his name on it. *Visitation Rites* and *Please Advise*, the two Paraphrase CDs released on Berne's Screwgun label, are good places to start for an earful of Rainey at his most freewheeling, if only because these live German club recordings from 1996 and 1998 suggest microphone placement close to his flailing sticks (not to mention a couple of drum solos on *Please Advise*). Also in the world of Berne, the two-CD live set *The Sublime* and by Science Friction stands as a high watermark for all involved. (Adapted from Dave Lynch, *All Music Guide*)

Drew Gress (bass)

Bassist/composer Drew Gress (born Trenton N.J. 1959) performs extensively with artists on the cutting edge of contemporary improvised music. His *7 Black Butterflies* (Premonition Records), released in 2005, features nine of Drew's original compositions. 2001's *Spin & Drift*, received widespread critical acclaim and also featured Drew's pedal-steel guitar playing. He also leads the quartet Jagged Sky; their debut recording, *Heyday* (Soul Note) was released in 1998 and is now considered somewhat of an underground classic. Previously, he was a founding member of the cooperative quartet Joint Venture, producing three albums in the early 1990s for Enja Records: *Joint Venture*, *Ways*, and *Mirrors*.



Drew Gress
Photo: Jimmy Katz

When Gress is not leading his own ensembles, he can be heard with Ralph Alessi, Tim Berne, Don Byron, Uri Caine, Bill Carrothers, Ravi Coltrane, Marc Copland, Fred Hersch, John Hollenbeck, Andy Laster, Tony Malaby, Mat Maneri, Simon Nabatov, Ben Perowsky, and Tim Ziesmer. (In a previous musical life, he grounded the performances of Buddy Hackett, Phyllis Diller, Zoot Sims, Cab Calloway, and yes . . . Pia Zadora).

Gress has toured North, South, and Central America, Europe, and Asia, and has served as artist-in-residence at St. Petersburg Conservatory in Russia and at the University of Colorado-Boulder. *The Guardian* selected a concert given by his Spin & Drift quartet as London's Best Jazz Concert for 2002, and in the same year he received a SESAC Composer's Award; this in addition to previous grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and Meet the Composer. He currently resides in New York and is an Endorsing Artist for Thomastik strings.



Ralph Alessi
Photo courtesy the artist

Ralph Alessi (trumpet)

Sine 1991, trumpeter/composer/educator Ralph Alessi has been an active member of the New York jazz and improvised music scene as both sideman and leader. Called ". . . a highly-in-demand, adventurous virtuoso who can handle just about anything" (*LA Weekly*), Alessi has performed and recorded with the likes of Steve Coleman, Uri Caine, Don Byron, Ravi Coltrane, Sam Rivers, Drew Gress, and many other of the great innovators in improvised music.

As a leader, Alessi has four recordings to his name: *Hissy Fit*, *Vice Virtue*, *This Against That* (voted one of the top ten records of 2002 by *Jazz Times*), and in 2007 released *Look*, featuring his band This Against That.

As an educator, Alessi has been a member of the faculties at Five Towns College and the Eastman School of Music. He is currently the founder and director of the School for Improvisational Music, a non-profit entity currently holding improvisational music workshops in Brooklyn. Since 2002, he has been on the jazz faculty at New York University.

Tickets to Prezents Quartet and Drew Gress' 7 Black Butterflies are \$25 (\$21 Walker members) and are available at walkerart.org/tickets or by calling 612.375.7600.

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