

## VITAE

### DONALD KNAACK

composer/percussionist/sound sculptor/environmentalist

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### EDUCATION

- B.M.Ed – University of Louisville School of Music
- MM – Manhattan School of Music
- Mentoring with: John Cage, Yannis Xenakis, Morton Feldman, Earle Browne, and Lejaren Hiller

### EXPERIENCE

Creator, composer and performer of Junk Music™. Junk Music is composed/improvised music performed exclusively on junk and recycled materials. Most concerts close with a Junkjam™, where audience members grab a provided stick and piece of junk and everyone becomes a community of rhythm and chanting environmental phrases. Junkjams can also be stand-alone events such as a campus gathering.

- Solo concerts performed worldwide at concert venues, festivals, schools and universities, including World Environment Day at the United Nations, Llangollen International Music Eisteddfod, B Love Festival (Basingstoke), Grinagog, The Van's Warped Tour with Eminem and The Black Eyed Peas, The Great Went and Lemonwheel with Phish, The Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, Music Center Los Angeles, Sundance Film Festival, Seoul Drum Festival, Summer Series Dubai, Escena Contemporana (Madrid), Zagreb Biennale, Summer Series Dubai, and the United Nations COP 16 Climate Change Conference in Cancun, Mexico.
- Creates Junk Music Playstations, sound sculptures made exclusively from recycled materials on which 20 to 50 people can jam together. Playstations have been created at First Night Boston, America Creates for the Millennium, Fort Worth Arts Festival, Kansas City International Jazz Festival, Discover Jazz Festival (Vermont), Canterbury Faire (Seattle), Snake River Roaring Youth Jam (Idaho), Utah Arts Festival, The Junkyard Museum (Memphis), Greensboro Children's Museum (North Carolina), Boston Children's Museum, Escana Contemporanea (Madrid, Spain), Summer Series, Dubai (UAE) and First Works Providence (RI). Playstation residencies have been conducted in elementary, middle and high schools in over 30 states in the US, as well as abroad.
- Composed The Environmental Continuum for junk percussion soloist and symphony orchestra and commissioned by Louisville Youth Orchestra, Mansfield Symphony, and Eastern Music Festival Orchestra
- Composed full-length opera, ODIN, for six spoken word artists/singers, chorus and eleven percussionists performing exclusively on amplified recycled materials. ODIN was workshopped and premiered at New York University. *The New York Times* stated, "The appeal of the whole thing lay in

its youthful energy and striking instrumentation.” *NPR* called it “a complex and contemporary work.”

- Junk Music has been featured in television commercials for Air BnB, PowerDot, Paddle to Live, Itinéraire Bis NIKE SB, The NBA, ESPN, and Electronic Arts.
- Junk Music and Knaack have appeared on the BBC, Late Night with Conan O’Brien as well as CBS Sunday Morning, National Public Radio, and CBS News.
- Solo concerts and lectures worldwide on traditional percussion repertoire

#### **RECENT TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

- Guest residencies at Colleges and Universities in the US including: Brooklyn College, SUNY Buffalo, Buffalo State College, California Institute for the Arts, Eastman School of Music, Fairleigh Dickinson University, Cal State Fullerton, George Mason University, University of California Irvine, Lehman College, University of California Long Beach, Manhattan School of Music, Middlebury College, Montclair State University, University of New Hampshire, New York University, Cal State Northridge, Princeton University, University of California Santa Barbara, University of California, San Diego, Skidmore College, University of Southern California, and University of Vermont.
- Junk Music classes, lectures, interactive workshops and residencies in schools, colleges, and universities in the US, the UK, Spain, Dubai, Korea, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Holland, Sweden, Poland, and Croatia.
- Creator of HOP (Help Our Planet) environmental education program for students of all ages. A program that fuses environmental consciousness & stewardship through the medium of music. Each student selects a pair of provided sticks and a small reused object. The student will then be taught a series of Enviro-chants. An enviro-chant is a very short message about a small change students can make in their daily habits that will have a huge positive impact upon the health of Planet Earth. HOP also includes our Holistic Environment, which incorporates lessons about inclusiveness, kindness, and social justice. HOP has been presented with Awards of Excellence from The United Nations, UN COP16 Conference on Climate Change, Federal Republic of Mexico, and the Governor of the State of Vermont.
- Lectures: Entrepreneurship, marketing, diversity, and self-sufficiency in today’s music business / Teacher Training: Junk Music / Rhythm & Improvisation / Realizing Contemporary Music: Improvisation, Graphic & conceptual Scores

#### **OTHER TEACHING & PERFORMANCE EXPERIENCE**

- Faculty, Castleton State College, Castleton, VT
- State University of New York at Buffalo: Professor of Music
- Guest lectures and residencies on contemporary percussion repertoire at colleges and universities worldwide
- Musik Akademie der Stadt Basel (Switzerland) - Annual Residency
- (1980-1990) Over 150 solo concerts in cities throughout the United States, including New York City’s Carnegie Hall, England, Iceland, France, Belgium,

Luxembourg, Italy, Croatia, and Greece.

## **RECORDINGS**

Recordings mixed by veteran rock producer David Kahne.

- The Raven by Edgar Alan Poe, Moo Records (for narrator and hip-hop orchestra)
- Nat Res + Mo Na + Man (Natural Resources + Mother Nature + Man)
- Junk Music, Moo Records
- Junk Music 2, Moo Records

Recordings mixed by other producers

- Compilation, Fat City Records
- State of the Union, EMF Records
- Dance Music, RR Records
- The Three Constructions of John Cage, Tomato Records
- Inside the Plastic Lotus, Hat Hut Records
- Donald Knaack, Percussionist, Atlantic Finnadar Records
- Rothko Chapel, Columbia Records
- Knaack has appeared on twelve Louisville Orchestra First Edition Records as a member of the Louisville Orchestra.

## **GRANTS, AWARDS AND COMMISSIONS**

- 2020: SABRE Technical Development Project Grant from the European Union to design and construct a robotic percussion instrument at Bristol Robotics Laboratory
- 2018: Eva Dean Dance Company commission
- 2018: Appointed Ambassador of Arts Education - The UNESCO English Riviera Global Geopark, Torquay, UK
- 2018: Cockington Court, Torquay, UK. Solo exhibition of sound sculptures April through September. Also a sound sculpture as a part of the 2018 Sculpture Trail.
- 2017: Awarded Tier One Exceptional Talent Visa to live/work in the UK
- 2015: Twyla Tharp Dance commission
- 2013: Twyla Tharp Dance commission
- 2012: American Ballet Theatre/Ballet commission Manchester, VT
- 2010: Singing for the Planet Award, United Nations and Federal Government of Mexico
- 2009: Eva Dean Dance Company Commission/Ballet Manchester Commission
- 2008: Vermont Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence
- 2008: Best Artistic Program, First Night International
- 2008: Featured in book, When I Grow Up by Jessica Loy, Holt & Company
- 2006: Burr & Burton Academy Commission
- 2004: Commission from the Louisville Orchestra, Mansfield Symphony and Eastern Music Festival for a concerto for Reused Materials and Symphony Orchestra
- 2000: Commission from Twyla Tharp Dance Company, The Kennedy Center

and American Dance Festival

- 2000: Commission from America Creates for the Millennium (NEA & Clinton Administration)
- 2000: Millennium Commission First Night Boston
- 1999: American Ballet Theatre and Twyla Tharp collaboration
- 1998: Vermont Community Foundation Award
- 1998: Vermont Arts Council Commission
- 1998: Award for Environmental Excellence from the United Nations
- 1997: Grammy ballot nomination in Best New Classical category
- 1997: Fund for US Artists at International Festivals
- 1997: Vermont Arts Council Professional Development Grant
- 1996: Vermont Arts Council Touring Artist Award
- 1993: International Humanities Award, Washington D.C.
- 1991: Bella Lewitzky Dance Company commission for Spoleto Festival

#### **PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

- PRS
- PPL
- Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia
- Percussive Arts Society
- American Federation of Musicians
- Musicians' Union UK

#### **PERFORMED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THESE CONDUCTORS:**

Michael Tilson Thomas, Jorge Mester, Yoav Talmi, Werner Torkanowsky, Donald Johanos, Robert Craft, Robert Whitney, Igor Stravinsky, Lucas Foss, Lawrence Foster, Robert Shaw, Thor Johnson, Michael Charry, Sixten Ehrling, Aaron Copland, Arthur Fiedler, Morton Gould, Claude Monteaux, and Andre Kostalenetz

#### **COLLABORATED WITH THESE CHOREOGRAPHERS/DANCE COMPANIES:**

American Ballet Theatre, Dance Theatre of Harlem, Washington Ballet, American Dance Festival, The Kennedy Center, Ballet Manchester, Twyla Tharp Dance, Twyla Tharp, Murray Louis, Bella Lewitzky, Anna Licea, Donna Sternberg, Linda Swiniuch, Motion X, Eva Dean Dance, and Nederlands Dans Theater

#### **PRESS AND MEDIA REVIEWS:**

- ...a virtuoso percussionist. New York Times
- He's the Max Roach of the dumpster. Washington Post
- It's a mind blowing experience! Conan O'Brien
- ... the legendary percussion virtuoso. Village Voice
- Virtuoso playing worth hearing. Downbeat Magazine
- Starting with John Cage, there have been quite a few composers who have worked with junk and found objects to create their music. However, no one does it with quite as much finesse as Donald Knaack. Dirty Linen Magazine
- Feature article in May, 2017 issue of DRUM Magazine:  
<http://junkmusic.online/wpcontent/uploads/2017/05/drummag.pdf>