

# NewMusic NewCollege

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## WORKERS UNION: MUSIC OF LOUIS ANDRIESSEN AND NIK BÄRTSCH

SATURDAY, MARCH 20, 2021

New College  
THE HONORS COLLEGE of Florida

# NewMusicNewCollege

Mark Dancigers, Director  
R. L. Silver, Producer

## *WORKERS UNION: MUSIC OF LOUIS ANDRIESEN AND NIK BÄRTSCH*

Saturday, March 20, 2021 • 5 p.m.

PepsiCo Arcade • New College of Florida

Event Sponsor:  
Bernard Friedland

### PROGRAM

*Workers Union* (1977)

Louis Andriessen (b. 1939)

*Modul 22* (2002)

Nik Bärtsch (b. 1971)

### *Musicians:*

Peter Carney – Saxophone

Lee Collings – Flute

Mark Dancigers – Electric Guitar

Rachel Halvorson – Viola

Ash Hoffman – Cello

John Miller – Bass

Aaron Nix—Drums

R.L. Silver – Synthesizer

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## PROGRAM NOTE

Louis Andriessen's startling "Workers Union" is a score constructed like no other. Each player performs from the same score, which uses a single staff line to designate the middle register of the player's instrument—midway between the lowest and highest notes. The music is written with detailed rhythms and a clear indication of pitch direction—that is, higher or lower notes—but no precise pitches are indicated for anyone.



At first, reading this kind of notation is disorienting.

Gradually, as the performer becomes more accustomed to this system of making music, Andriessen's vision and intent become clearer. When a group of players starts putting it together, there is an electric energy.

Written in 1975 for "any loud sounding group of instruments," Andriessen's piece showcases elements of his musical language that would become recognizable features in future pieces. The harmony is non-functional and dissonant; unison lines are heavily favored, and the rhythmic language is often aggressive. Andriessen writes that "only in the case of every player playing with such an intention that their part is an essential one, the work will succeed; just as in the political work." Paradoxically, the extreme emphasis in "Workers Union" on playing in unison increases the level of player responsibility. Each player must somehow carry the whole piece, together with others.

Swiss composer and pianist Nik Bärtsch also creates music that demands a heightened sense of performance integrity. His many albums and compositions for the band Rōnin, released on the ECM label over the past several decades, emphasize a rhythmic intensity, repetition, and a group "vibe" that makes his music instantly recognizable. "Rōnin" were Japanese samurai who served no master, and Bärtsch is explicit about the way his music relates to martial arts.

"I practice Aikido. The foundational ideas are there: collaborative thinking and acting, handling the opponent in oneself and one's own fear, and the training of precise movements for that—it's basically about being present. From martial arts one can learn not to sleep while being awake. There is only one chance in a battle; it's about the one fitting and precise anticipation or reaction in movement. One has to think with the body. With making music, it's the same for me."

— Interview in *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, with thanks for the translation by Visiting Assistant Professor of German Lauren Hansen

While his music has been described as "Zen funk," Bärtsch maintains that there is a deep virtuosity in the grooves. "I believe that one already recognizes virtuosity in the precise surrender of the musician to the music."

Mark Dancigers  
Director, New Music New College

## LOUIS ANDRIESSEN

Louis Andriessen (b.1939) is widely regarded as the leading composer working in the Netherlands today and a central figure in the international new music scene. From a background of jazz and avant-garde composition, Andriessen has evolved a style employing elemental harmonic, melodic and rhythmic materials, heard in totally distinctive instrumentation. His range of inspiration is wide, from the music of Charles Ives in "Anachronie I," the art of Mondriaan in "De Stijl," and medieval poetic visions in "Hadewijch," to writings on shipbuilding and atomic theory in "De Materie Part I."

Andriessen's compositions have attracted many leading exponents of contemporary music, including the two Dutch groups named after his works De Volharding and Hoketus. Other eminent ensembles who have commissioned or performed his works include AskolSchoenberg, San Francisco Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Kronos Quartet, London Sinfonietta, and the Bang on a Can All Stars.

Recent commissions include "Mysteriën," premiered by the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and Mariss Jansons; "Agamemnon" for the New York Philharmonic, premiering in fall 2018; and "The only one" for Los Angeles Philharmonic, premiering in April 2019. His newest opera, "Theatre of the World," about the 17th-century polymath Athanasius Kircher, received first performances in Los Angeles and Amsterdam in 2016, and was released on disc by Nonesuch in 2017.

Louis Andriessen held the Richard and Barbara Debs Composer's Chair at Carnegie Hall, and was awarded Composer of the Year Award by Musical America in 2010. He won the 2011 Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition for his opera La Commedia and in 2016 was awarded the Kravis Prize for New Music including the commission of his orchestral work Agamemnon.

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## NIK BÄRTSCH

RITUAL GROOVE MUSIC, the title of my first CD, also points to the fundamental concept of my musical thinking. The music shows a close affinity to architecturally organized space and is governed by the principles of repetition and reduction as well as by interlocking rhythms. A piece of music can be entered, inhabited like a room. It moves forward and transforms through obsessive circular movements, superimposition of different meters and micro-interplay. The listeners attention is directed toward minimal variations and phrasing. The band becomes an integral organism—like an animal, a habitat, an urban space. One must think with ears and hands. Normally, we work in three distinct formations. The group MOBILE plays purely acoustic music, performed in rituals of up to 36 hours, including light and room design. The Zen-funk quartet RONIN, by contrast, is more flexible and plays the compositions more freely. As a solo performer, I perform my compositions on prepared piano with percussion.

Despite the tightly organized compositional construction, improvisation plays an important role in our music. On the one hand, accentuation, ghost notes, and variations within a composition are tossed back and forth between the musicians; on the other hand, a particular voice within a composition might have more freedom than the others. In doing so, that voice forms an independent module that can interact with the strictly notated interlocking patterns in continuously changing ways. Groove-habitats or void musical space of raw poetry emerge. My thinking and music are based on the tradition of urban space. They are not distilled from a national or stylistic tradition but from the universal sound of cities. The city in its roaring diversity requires an ability to focus and concentrate on the essential: to measure one's actions, to remain silent at the right place. This music draws its energy from the tension between compositional precision and the self-circumvention of improvisation. From self-implied restriction stems freedom. Ecstasy through asceticism.

## MUSICIANS

**Dr. Peter Carney** is a professional saxophonist, recording artist, and DJ from Chicago. His ensemble, Pete Carney and Orange Alert, is an acid jazz group that has performed throughout Europe and the United States. He is currently Director of Jazz Studies at the State College of Florida. His app, "Interactive Listening," was named by Apple Inc. as the number 1 Editor's Choice in the App Store in 2012.

**Lee Collings** is a second-year humanities and creative writing AOC who has been playing the flute for nine years. They are from Gainesville, FL and enjoy listening to and playing rock, punk, and romantic classical music.

**Mark Dancigers** is a composer, performer, educator, and Director of New Music New College. He has composed music for the New York City Ballet, received performances by the Alabama Symphony and the Minnesota Orchestras, among others, and released numerous albums with the chamber music group NOW Ensemble.

**Rachel Halvorson**, Principal Viola of the Sarasota Orchestra, holds degrees from Oberlin Conservatory (BM), studying with Peter Slowik, and Rice University (MM), where she acted as Teaching Assistant to Ivo Van der Werff and coached chamber music for the Rice Preparatory Program. Rachel has performed with orchestras such as the Cincinnati, Houston, San Antonio, Akron, Syracuse and New World symphonies, and Boston Symphony Orchestra in an opportunity through Tanglewood. During the summer season, she has joined Tanglewood, Spoleto Festival, National Repertory Orchestra, and Credo Festival on fellowships.

Rachel recently was awarded first prize at the American Viola Society's Excerpt Competition and Collegiate Solo Competition. An advocate for contemporary classical music, Rachel has performed with numerous ensembles, including Hear & Now and KINETIC: The Conductorless Ensemble, a vibrant string chamber orchestra focusing on "showcasing diverse, under represented, and newly composed classical music through flexible chamber and orchestral formats." She is excited to join Sarasota's EnsembleNEWSRQ this season.

**Ash Hoffman** is a Music AOC from Greenville, South Carolina. She previously studied cello performance under Robert O'Brien at the SC Governors School for the Arts and Humanities. Ash writes their own music as well as plays in many ensembles and gigs.

**John Miller**, Principal Bass of the Sarasota Orchestra, enjoys collaborating with a wide range of musician in various genres. He has performed as soloist with orchestras in New York and Florida, and has performed Schubert's Trout Quintet with Andre Watts. He also regularly performs with a variety of jazz groups and is the leader of the Sarasota Jazz Ensemble. Mr. Miller has made several recordings, including his 2002 debut, "Miller and Ramsier play Ramsier" on Albany records. He was a member of the New World Symphony in Miami, where he toured Japan, the UK and Costa Rica.

**Aaron Nix** is a professional percussionist based out of Sarasota, Florida, and was most recently the drummer/percussionist for the first national tour of the Broadway revival of Andrew Lloyd Webber's iconic musical CATS. Other credits include the tours of Webber's Love Never Dies (first national), Disney's Beauty and the Beast (national and first international), and the international tour of Leonard Bernstein's beloved classic West Side Story. Mr. Nix can also be heard in regular engagements with the Sarasota Orchestra, and the Sarasota Opera. He holds a BA from Texas Tech University, an MMA and an Artist Certificate from Southern Methodist University.

**R. L. Silver** has performed, composed, and done tech work for New Music New College since it was founded in 1998. Before that he was the composer, lead singer, and keyboard player in the New York alternative rock band No Radio.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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