

# CAPITAL

## Thanks to Bang on a Can, a noise-rock show sneaks in the back door of Alice Tully Hall tomorrow

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By Seth Colter Walls

**Contemporary classical listeners in New York tend to think they have heard all the progressive-composition sounds emanating from music scenes the world over, thanks to the Bang On A Can collective.**

While the founding composers associated with the enterprise—Julia Wolfe, David Lang and Michael Gordon—are always the expected voices on a given program, various events put on under the Bang banner have often branched out beyond mere cliqueish, locally sourced programming. Aside from the New York veterans, you might expect to hear some folk music from Mongolia, or else some gamelan ensemble from Indonesia.



*Asphalt Orchestra; Tatsuya Yoshida*

The stylistic diversity on offer at the yearly Bang On A Can marathon—which usually clocks in at between 12 and 24 hours of music performed in dozens of acts—is reliably one of the high points on the “new music” calendar. But this weekend a Bang event is doing something particularly audacious (and even more surprising than putting on Anthony Braxton’s piece for 100 tubas). On Saturday night, as part of a residency at Lincoln Center, the organization is sneaking a noise-rock concert into Alice Tully Hall—if one by another name.

Tatsuya Yoshida is the drummer of the long-running Japanese noise-rock duo Ruins. For three decades, his principal band has pounded its gospel of rhythmically complex, quasi-improvised thrash across the globe. (The duo collaborated memorably with British free-improvisational guitar hero Derek Bailey in the late 90s.) But it would take the Asphalt Orchestra—the Bang On A Can house “marching band”—to commission a suite of music by Yoshida to bring into Alice Tully Hall’s Starr Theater.

Thanks to a grant from the Japan Foundation, Yoshida will be there to add his drums to the 12-piece marching group this weekend—the first time the Asphalters have augmented their number to accommodate an outside musician. Titled “Zwimbarrac Khafzavrapp” —Yoshida pieces tend to be a quizzical mouthful—the 12-minute piece may never be heard this way again, either.

According to group co-director and alto-saxophonist Ken Thomson, a recording won't be on the cards along the margins of this world premiere. (The Asphalt-ers' premiere disc for the Bang On A Can label was a memorable entry in 2009, with arrangements of Zappa, Mingus and other composers working in far-flung genres.) In an interview with Capital directly after the Asphalt Ensemble's first rehearsal with Yoshida this week, Thomson said: “We asked him to send us a piece—which he has—which works with us alone, or with him playing drum set with us. Even yesterday he was experimenting with what he could do playing alongside us. What he's doing is bringing out accents he's hearing in the piece. ... The piece we can definitely do on our own and we plan on doing it on our own. But this maybe the only time it'll happen that he's playing it with us.”

Arrangements of two other Ruins songs are also on the Saturday program at Lincoln Center. Asked how the two-instrument blast of the band could possibly be outfitted for an ensemble that has nine horns in addition to three percussionists, Thomson argued against a narrow reading of what goes into the music of Ruins.

“There's more polyphony than you think,” he said. “Sometimes it's a little bit buried. And at a lot of times there's [some] dense harmonic material going on. Ruins are just a duo, so what they would do is use a harmonizer on the bass [for looping material]. What we're talking about, in arranging, is taking that looped material and playing it on top ... and soon you get close to the nine horns we have.” Adding that Yoshida's music his “is pretty technically demanding” overall, Thomson said the first rehearsal was especially challenging for the group's brass players, all of whom “are playing nonstop.”

“There's moments of total noise in there, but there's a lot of stuff that's not just noise. There's a lot of tunes, a lot of melody—and sometimes I think that can be obscured by the way Ruins play the stuff. With brass and winds, you hear some of that melody in a different way.”

Though the Yoshida mini-set is clearly the rare delicacy on Saturday's menu, it's hardly the only enticing thing being offered up. A new multi-composer suite called “Field Recordings”—in which, yes, each composer's section incorporates recordings made out “in the field”—features contributions from art-world phenom Christian Marclay and Tyondai Braxton, formerly of the math-rock band Battles. On any other evening in New York, their joint participation in a Bang On A Can concert would count as the unusual sparkle. (Bang founders Wolfe, Lang and Gordon all contribute music to “Field Recordings,” as well.) But Yoshida's debut as a suite composer and arranger of his own personal brand of noise sounds is hard to beat as this weekend's must-hear attraction for the omnivorous listener.

<http://www.capitalnewyork.com/article/culture/2012/04/5787039/thanks-bang-can-noise-rock-show-sneaks-back-door-alice-tully-hall-to>