

# RELÂCHE

Experience > Music > Innovation

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## **BOOKING INFORMATION**

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# HISTORY

Relâche is a Grammy nominated new music ensemble whose mission is to connect music with people by providing audiences with ways to experience the adventurous and entertaining music of today, which we create through collaboration, innovation, diversity and respect. For over thirty years, Relâche has maintained an international reputation as a leader in commissioning and performing the pioneering and exciting music of our time. Relâche is among the oldest continuously operating, non-profit chamber ensembles dedicated to contemporary music in the US. It has consistently offered world-class performances of music by leading American and international composers and artists. In addition, Relâche has always invested heavily in the future of new music through its commitment to the work of young and emerging composers. To date, Relâche has performed more than 600 concerts in the Greater Philadelphia area, around the country and the globe, including residency, festival and touring appearances in South America, Japan and Europe. The Ensemble keeps a touring-ready repertoire of over 50 pieces and a repertory library of over 400 works. More than 200 of these are Relâche commissions, including works by Robert Ashley, John Cage, Fred Frith, Kyle Gann, David Lang, Michael Nyman, Pauline Oliveros, and Philip Glass. Relâche has released seven CDs to date: *Relâche on Edge* (1991, Mode), *Outcome Inevitable* (1994, O.O. Disks) the Grammy-nominated *Pick It Up* (1997, Monroe Street), *Press Play* (2006, Meyer Media), *From the Philip Glass Recording Archive Vol 2* (2007, Orange Mountain Music), *Eight Point Turn* (2008, Meyer Media), and *Kyle Gann's The Planets* (2010, Meyer Media).

Relâche is known for embracing diversity in the concert hall and regularly works with composers and organizations who draw influences from outside of the Western European classical music tradition. In recent years, the ensemble has worked with composers from Africa, Turkey, Cyprus, and Scotland; and, has formed innovative partnerships with regional cultural institutions Taller Puertorriqueño and the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas Gospel Choir.

Relâche has always worked to ensure the future of classical music by commissioning younger, emerging composers, and by performing and recording works by student composers at colleges and universities. This has become an increasingly important part of the ensemble's work and recent residencies include the University of Delaware, Rowan University, the University of Virginia, the University of Pittsburgh, the College of William & Mary, and Rice University.

Relâche currently self-produces 3-5 concerts each season, with most featuring world premiere commissions. Highlights since 2001 include Relâche's first full-length dance/music commission, *Mixed Company*, with music by Guy Klucevsek and choreography by Meredith Rainey; a ground-breaking video, installation and performance commission, *The Bell and the Glass*, by Christian Marclay, co-produced with the Philadelphia Museum of Art; several live accompanied silent film programs, including Alfred Hitchcock's *The Lodger* with score by Joby Talbot, and Buster Keaton's *The General* with improvised score by the ensemble; 2010's "Glass Reich Bryars" concert with the Philadelphia Singers and Orchestra 2001 which featured the first ever live performance of Philip Glass' *TSE*, commissioned by Relâche in 1994; as well as special events, such as Phil Kline's cult Christmas classic *Unsilent Night*, CAGE12 – a John Cage 90th birthday tribute, and Revue Relâche – a 12-hour non-stop music marathon to mark Relâche's 25th Anniversary.

## WHAT ARE THE CRITICS SAYING?

“As usual, Relâche played with great comprehension. It also rocked.”

- **David Patrick Stearns, *The Philadelphia Inquirer***

“I almost never leave a Relâche concert without experiencing something that is uniquely stimulating, thought-provoking and, ultimately, beautiful. I don't know of any other live musical experience that can elicit such an explosive range of reaction.”

- **Peter Burwasser, *Philadelphia City Paper***

“Most contemporary ensembles don't have the, well, ensemble, that Relâche showed. They were tight the way an orchestra is tight and it really made the music come alive.”

- **Andrew Druckenbrod, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette***

“The ensemble is so at home in new gestures and conflicting inner workings that the music sounded simple, expressive, wryly descriptive, and cheerfully edgy.”

- **Daniel Webster, *The Philadelphia Inquirer***

“Relâche is one of the great quality-of-life-enhancers in Philadelphia. It presents accomplished, genre-bending music that is all-but-guaranteed to give you more than you can handle. Now that some quarters of the contemporary music world increasingly set their sights low, Relâche is, more than ever, indispensable.”

- **David Patrick Stearns, *The Philadelphia Inquirer***

“Relâche has its own distinct recognizable ensemble personality, a thoughtful interpretive personality and the ability to listen to one another rather than just follow a conductor. As a result, Relâche is to new music what Tennstedt or Abbado is to Mahler...”

- ***The Village Voice***

“Relâche is not bound by the heady ‘intellectualization’ of contemporary music... it is interested in the sound which is produced.”

- ***Japan Times***

“The audience reacted to Relâche, a unique ensemble from America, like a classroom of students which slowly grasps what the teacher has taught them.”

- ***The Daily Yomiuri (Tokyo, Japan)***

“Relâche has a strong, but tensile, artistic vision tempered with a politically sensitive relationship to the community, insistence on the artistic integrity and the recognition of the artists’ importance. All of this secures Relâche’s position as one of America’s most active and visible new music organizations.”

- ***Chamber Music America Magazine***

“Relâche, Philadelphia’s ensemble for new music, doesn’t play wishy-washy new romantics or ‘uptown’ academic serialists but thrives on the off-the-wall...”

- ***The Wall Street Journal***

## WHAT'S WITH THE NAME?

**The French word “relâche” [“ruh-lash”] literally means “rest” or “break.” In the theater, it means “no performance,” or “the theater is dark”. “Sorry, we’re en relâche.”**

**Paris 1924** – The revolutionary Dada movement rebels against the dry formalism of “high culture” and ignites the art world with a new mix of sounds and ideas from popular and “low culture.” Four leading Dadaists create a multimedia work called Relâche. Erik Satie writes the music; René Clair makes a film; Jean Börlin choreographs and Francis Picabia directs. On opening night, the performance is mysteriously cancelled (en relâche?), and the audience is sent home—a Dada joke? One week later, Relâche premieres, the crowd riots, and the show runs for a year.



**New York City 1960s** – Maverick composers and players challenge the dissonant and complex music being written at “uptown” conservatories. They create a daring new music, drawing from diverse styles and genres, from popular and folk, to jazz and electronics. Crowds flock to their performances in the lofts of lower Manhattan, and the idea of “Downtown” new music is born.

**Philadelphia 1979** – A composer-performer collective names itself Relâche to express the populist, boundary-breaking and genre-bending connections between Downtown and Dada.

**Philadelphia Today** – The internationally renowned octet Relâche Ensemble fuses the familiar sounds of our popular world with the freshness and edge of the experimental avant garde and plays to a diverse and rapidly growing audience.

### Relâche Ensemble

Andrea Clearfield	piano/keyboards
Bob Butryn	clarinets/saxophones
Chuck Holdeman	bassoon/contrabassoon
Chris Hanning	percussion
Michele Kelly	flutes
Amy Leonard	viola
Douglas Mapp	contrabass/electric bass
Lloyd Shorter	oboe/English horn

# BIOGRAPHIES

**Bob Butryn (Saxophones & Clarinets)** has a Bachelor of Music from Temple University where he majored in clarinet. He has performed with numerous classical, jazz and rock ensembles in the Philadelphia area. In addition to playing with Relâche, Bob has his own band called the Bob Butryn Orchestra, and he has played in Berlin over the last three years in a progressive klezmer band called Klingon Klezmer. Bob is also a dancer. He has arranged and choreographed a music/dance show called Crazy Rhythm, Fancy Feet which is based on a wide variety of American music and dance styles and forms.

**Andrea Clearfield (Piano/Keyboards)** is a prolific composer of music for chamber ensembles, chorus and orchestra and her works have been performed internationally by noted artists such as Edgar Meyer, Carol Wincenc, James Buswell and actresses Valerie Harper and Laraine Newman. She received a DMA in Composition from Temple University where she was a Presidential Fellow and student of Maurice Wright, an MM in Piano from the University of the Arts where she was a student of Susan Starr, and a BA in Music from Muhlenberg College where she studied with her mentor, Margaret Garwood. She has served on the Composition Faculty at The University of the Arts and the Associate Piano Faculty of the Sarasota Music Festival since 1986. Andrea's works are published by Oxford University Press and International Opus.

**Chris Hanning (Percussion)** is the Director of Percussion Activities at West Chester University. He is the principal percussionist/timpanist with the Lehigh Valley Chamber Orchestra and timpanist with the Bach Festival Orchestra of Bethlehem. He also performs drum set with the jazz trio M.P.H. featuring saxophonist Gunnar Mossblad, and with the Peter Paulsen Quintet. Chris has performed on numerous recordings for NFL Films including two Emmy Award Winning projects. His most recent recordings include soundtracks for My Father's Gun and Blood From a Stone (History Channel Movies), various selections for the closing ceremony of the 2006 Super Bowl, a CD with legendary saxophonist David Leibman and the Manhattan Saxophone Quartet titled The Seasons Reflected (Soul Note), a CD by the M.P.H. Trio titled Curves (GPC Records), and a CD by the Bach Choir of Bethlehem (Dorian). Recent reviews of Chris Hanning's performance on The Seasons Reflected note "...drummer Hanning is magnificent." (Wire Magazine, England) and "...profound African drumming" (All about Jazz).

**Chuck Holdeman (Bassoon)** is a composer and a bassoonist. He has written songs, works for band, orchestra, and small ensembles, film and educational music. Chuck is principal bassoonist for the Delaware Symphony Orchestra, having joined the orchestra in 1981, and for the Bach Festival of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, since 1969. He is a graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music, where he studied with Sol Schoenbach; he later studied with Maurice Allard in France. He was a member of the Buffet Trio for more than 20 years, also performing, touring nationally and internationally, and recording with Philadelphia's new music group, Relâche, for 10 seasons. Chuck Holdeman has been an artist-in-residence at hospitals, colleges, senior centers, and has worked with students from Headstart through all the grades. His sponsors have included Meet the Composer, ASCAP, American Composers Forum/Philadelphia, the Delaware and Washington State Arts Councils, Soundhouse, ArtsAware, and Wolf Trap for Early Childhood.

**Michele Kelly (Flutes, Co-Artistic Director)** joined the group in 1998. The New York-born, Houston-raised flutist is an experienced chamber musician, performing with numerous ensembles varying in size and style. She plays an active role at the University of Pennsylvania's College House music program, a unique teaching and mentorship program within a residency environment. Michele received her M.M. from the University of Michigan, where she also earned a post-Master's Specialist degree in chamber music performance. The daughter of noted abstract expressionist painter James Groff lives with her husband, multi-instrumentalist Darin Kelly, sons Eamon and Eoin and daughter Maureen in the Fairmount section of Philadelphia.

**Amy Leonard (Viola)** earned performance degrees from the Oberlin Conservatory and the Manhattan School of Music. Principal teachers have included Leonard Mogill, Jeffrey and Lynne Ramsey Irvine, Karen Ritscher, and Charles Bruck. Amy is an active recitalist and chamber musician with a repertoire ranging from music of the Baroque era to the present, and has participated in a number of music festivals in North America and Europe such as Aspen, Banff, Spoleto USA, and Mostra Mozart in Venice, Italy. Amy also enjoyed a long relationship with the Pierre Monteux School in Hancock, Maine, first as student, then as administrator and director of the school's chamber music series. Past orchestral positions have been with the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, the New World Symphony (Miami Beach, FL), and as assistant principal violist with the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, where Amy was also a member of the internationally recognized contemporary ensemble Nua Nos, or "New Noise."

**Douglas Mapp (Contrabass/Electric Bass)** is a graduate of the Philadelphia College of the Performing Arts and the Temple University Graduate School of Music. He is principal bassist with the Reading Symphony, Kennett Square Symphony and Opera Delaware. Doug is also a member of the Delaware Symphony and has performed with the Philadelphia Orchestra in Philadelphia, Saratoga, NY and on one of their recent European tours. He has performed under the batons of Riccardo Muti, Klaus Tennstedt, Wolfgang Sawalisch, Lukas Foss, Phillippe Entremont and Charles Dutoit. Doug is an active chamber musician having performed with the Mendelssohn String Quartet and the SEM Ensemble of New York. A frequent performer of jazz, he has performed with artists such as Ernie Watts, Doc Severinson, Billy Childs, Denis DiBlasio, Jimmy Bruno, Bobby McFerrin, Donald Byrd and James Moody. Doug is an Associate Professor of Jazz Studies at Rowan University.

**Lloyd Shorter (Oboe/English Horn, Co-Artistic Director)** has played with Relâche since 1990. As a soloist, he's performed under the direct consultation of many major composers, including John Corigliano, Joan Tower, and Simon Bainbridge. Lloyd's performances with Relâche have included the Prague Spring Festival, concerts in Berlin, Vienna, Warsaw, Cracow, Amsterdam, Vilnius, Seattle, Phoenix, New York City and Venezuela. He has received grants from the State of Delaware for solo work and touring, from the University of Delaware for Internet2 research, and was a Salzburg Seminar fellow to debate the future of classical music. Lloyd has been a member of the Delaware Symphony for over 30 years and is on the faculty at the University of Delaware, where he teaches oboe and English horn, along with numerous courses on music and cultural history, with an emphasis on contemporary music. At the University, he is also involved in research using Internet2 for music instruction featuring live class interviews with some of the most interesting creative artists of our time.

# CURRENT PROJECTS

Relâche's touring-ready projects each last approximately 90 minutes, and can be followed by post-concert discussions which give audiences a rare chance to ask questions and speak up-close-and-personal with our musicians. Here's a sampling of what Relâche can offer:

## THE PLANETS

Music: Kyle Gann – *The Planets* (10 movements)

Video: John Sanborn



This live music and video tour-de-force features Kyle Gann's magnum opus *The Planets* – a large-scale, ten-movement suite commissioned by Relâche. Gann says “my justification for writing my own such piece is this: music has not progressed since Holst, in the sense of having improved, the new superceding the old - but astrology has. My *Planets* may be better, may be worse, but their *raison d'etre* is that they are more suggestive of contemporary astrology than Holst's.” Director John Sanborn explores science, history and mythology in his dazzling video portrait of Gann's music.

## Reviews

"This music is intensely difficult to perform but Gann and Relâche never make it difficult to hear. The surface is attractive and approachable and repeated listenings reveal a web of clockwork structures that madly spin forth in a way that would make Bach jealous" (Jay Batzner, *Sequenza21.com*).

"The astrological ideas suggested the moods, and Gann's witty style shaped music that is built of tingly sounds, intricate metrical joining, and compelling movement. The ensemble craftily blurs the distinction between dance music and something much more serious... Gann has a sense of wit that keeps everything just beyond expectations, and always with an oblique sense of phrase. We could almost sing that theme - not quite - and be just a little wrong in predicting where the music would take us... The ensemble is so at home in new gestures and conflicting inner workings that the music sounded simple, expressive, wryly descriptive, and cheerfully edgy" (Daniel Webster, *Philadelphia Inquirer*).

## SONIC CINEMA: LES FILMS MUETS

Classic French silent films with new musical scores commissioned and performed live by Relâche:

*The Mystery of the Rocks at Kador* (dir. Léonce Perret) with new score by Régis Huby

*Max Takes a Picture* with new score by Chuck Holdeman

*Be My Wife* (dir. Max Linder) with new score by Chris McGlumphy



This live music and film experience of classic French silent films features *The Mystery of the Rocks of Kador* (1912, dir. Léonce Perret) with new score by Régis Huby, a French composer and jazz violinist known for his recordings on the ECM label. This Hitchcockian murder mystery is notable for complex plot and camera-work that's ahead of its time. The program also includes two Max Linder shorts with new scores by Chuck Holdeman and Chris McGlumphy. French comic actor Linder (1883-1925) was a pioneer of silent film who predated and influenced more well-known comedians including Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton.

### Reviews

"The ever-provocative Relâche ensemble found power in anachronism in "Les Films Muets"... The 44-minute *Kador* has beautiful seaside shots... any plot thickening was treated with intensified rhythm from the rock-influenced score by French violinist/composer Régis Huby. Generally, it was a smart network of ostinatos, wind solos, and rhythmic patterns whose interaction was fluidly adjusted to accentuate the emotional temperature of any given scene... The program's second half was short comedies by Max Linder... With faces came melodies in the excellent, pop-flavored score by Chris McGlumphy" (David Patrick Stearns, *Philadelphia Inquirer*).

## COMIX TRIPS

Music:

Paul Lansky – *Comix Trips*

Randall Woolf – *Canine State of Mind*

Galen Brown – *Waiting in the Tall Grass*

Raymond Scott – *Powerhouse*

Raymond Scott – *The Penguin*

Raymond Scott – *Twilight in Turkey*



This concert program features commissions from Relâche's most recent CD. The music is fun, but also extremely virtuosic. Paul Lansky has long been known for his computer music and was famously sampled by Radiohead on their *Kid A* album. Lately, he's received praise from the *NY Times* and others for his acoustic compositions, like *Comix Trips*, which takes its inspiration from famous comic strips and characters like Peanuts, Captain Marvel, Alfred E. Newman, and Little Orphan Annie. Randall Woolf and Galen Brown are both post-modern composers who are hard to categorize. Each combines electronics and digital processing with traditional instruments, and incorporates techniques most often found in rock music, but in strikingly different ways and with radically different results. Raymond Scott was an inventor of electronic musical instruments, a composer and bandleader. You'll recognize his *Powerhouse* (the assembly line music) from countless Bugs Bunny cartoons.

### Reviews

"Lansky's *Comix Trips*... contains many worlds within worlds. Each movement is ostensibly based on a comic strip character, the "Good Grief" one being my favorite: It has long descending lines for the wind instruments, brusque out-of-key piano flourishes, and ongoing percussion commentary - all gently, constantly morphing with great compositional refinement. As usual, Relâche played with great comprehension. It also rocked" (David Patrick Stearns, *Philadelphia Inquirer*).

"Saturday night at The Andy Warhol museum turned out to be one of the most enjoyable concerts I've gone to in some time. It was a brilliant and fun performance by Philadelphia's Relâche. Despite how close this group's haunts are, and that I have listened to its discs over the years, I never realized just what amazing musicians they are. Most contemporary ensembles don't have the, well, ensemble, that Relâche showed. They were tight the way an orchestra is tight and it really made the music come alive. Paul Lansky's "*Comix Trips*" benefited by the treatment, especially the second movement's emotional surge" (Andrew Druckenbrod, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*).

"Quite entertaining were arrangements of works by Raymond Scott, a composer and conductor of the jazz-swing-big band era. "Twilight in Turkey," "Penguin," and "Powerhouse" were gleeful, the original tunes of which were used in Looney Tune cartoons. In addition to writing music for his own band and jingles, he also created the electronium, an early attempt at using artificial intelligence to create music. With such a history, Scott's giddy music was a match for Relâche and its animated musicians" (John Shulson, *Virginia Gazette*).