

Guggenheim Fellowship Acknowledges the Life Work of Body Musician Keith Terry and Inspires the First International Body Music Festival

What is "body music?" If you ask **Keith Terry** he is likely to answer, "clapping, slapping, snapping, stepping, and vocalizing." The first a-ha! moment came while he was rehearsing with the renowned Jazz Tap Ensemble. Always intrigued by the gray area that blurs movement, music, and dance, Keith suddenly realized that he could transfer the music he was playing on the drum kit elsewhere. "I stood up and moved what I was playing on my drums to my body. That's how I came to it," remembers Keith.

Encouraged by Charles "Honi" Coles and Charlie "Cookie" Cook—great jazz tap stylists who recognized both the ingenuity of Keith's music and its similarity to the Hambone they'd performed in vaudeville—he launched into a little-explored career now known as body music.

Keith's creations go far deeper than the occasional stamp or clap. Falling somewhere between danced music and audible choreography, he sees in body music the ability to tap into one of the oldest expressions of humankind. Despite his diverse background—trained in jazz drumming, then working with tap dancers, physical comedians, and even circus performers in the '70s and '80s—it was hearing Javanese gamelan music performed live in the 1970s that forever changed the way he thought about music. "It was like my ears exploded. The gongs moved air in a way that you just don't hear in a recording. There's so much more to music than the notes and the rhythms."

His collaborations with gamelan ensembles and Indonesian musicians led him to think more closely about the deeper implications of working across cultures and how music represents culturally embedded values that exist outside of music. Perhaps the Indonesian emphasis on the end of musical cycles, rather than the beginning, indicates a fundamental value of looking towards the past rather than the future. Another concept—referred to as "rubber time" (*jam karet* in Indonesian) —is a gamelan musical term that comes from the perception that time is being stretched by those listening to the "shimmering" harmonics and complex rhythmic cycles of Javanese gamelan. The expression has no parallel in Western music, but is used in everyday vernacular language in Indonesian society in non-musical settings as well.

The Guggenheim fellowship Keith received this year—the first awarded to a body musician—has allowed him the opportunity to explore these kinds of music-meets-life concepts in greater depth. Focusing on collaboration with body musicians from different cultures including Turkey, Indonesia, and Brazil, the grant has provided funding for travel and research to explore some of the deeper cultural elements of body music performance. This travel and interaction has led to the first-of-its-kind International Body Music Festival, for which his non-profit arts organization, Crosspulse (www.crosspulse.com), is raising funds through private and public foundations, corporations and individual donations. The Festival takes place December 2-7, 2008 in both San Francisco and Oakland, California.

Keith sees the festival concept as comprising a larger vision, using this first year as a springboard for later touring festivals. The festival will represent an annual cycle of rhythm, while various international collaborations pulsate throughout the year, bringing a new global synchronicity to the continually emerging field of body music.