

*Contemporary Improvisation*

**François Houle  
Clarinet**

GUEST ARTIST CONCERT SERIES  
KATZIN CONCERT HALL  
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26, 2008 • 7:30 PM

**MUSIC**

 Herberger College  
of the Arts

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

## Program

### Aerials (2006)

François Houle  
(b. 1961)

### Faded Yellow (a portrait of John Carter)

Ab Baars  
(b. 1955)

### Sticks and Stones

John Carter  
(1928-1991)

#### Program Notes

**Aerials** is a suite of solo clarinet improvisations that utilizes several distinct extended techniques that I have acquired, developed, and perfected over the last decade. These techniques overlap, collapse, clash and permutate into an intricate sonic web, pushing the performer to the brink of chaos.

Stylistically, I have attempted in my improvisational approach to achieve a fine balance between the physicality required in the execution of these techniques and their resulting emotional value, thus creating an environment where the extreme conditions faced by the performer lead towards the transcendental, out-of-body experience that is much talked about by practitioners of Jazz and experimental music.

My fascination (obsession, really) with the sense of urgency and the sheer physicality that emerges from the execution of these ideas has led me to think of my instrument as a transmitter, akin to television aerials, hence the title. The notion of the performer as a medium (guru, shaman), a concept present in the music of many cultures, is somehow omnipresent here. The ritualistic quality in this music is not accidental, as most of the inspiration for my musical vocabulary on the clarinet is drawn from an eclectic range of sources, such as Solomon Island bamboo flutes, Sardinian Launeddas, Tuvan throat singing, new music clarinet repertoire, and free jazz (Evan Parker, John Carter, among others).

#### Clinic/Masterclass

François Houle's teaching is based on his vast knowledge of extended techniques and their application in traditional repertoire, as well as new music works improvisation and world music. Topics include musical interpretation, technical preparation, posture and breathing techniques, strategies for improvisation, the creative process, and career options in music.

Houle's innovative approach looks at the practical application of instrumental techniques in the areas of improvisational practices, electroacoustics, and XXth-century composition. With an emphasis on the understanding of musical parameters and how they work in complex systems, participants are introduced to new concepts of instrumental exploration, with improvisation as a means to self-discovery.

*This program has been made possible through a grant from Conn-Selmer, Inc. Milano Music Center is the participating Conn-Selmer dealer.*

#### Biography

Growing up Montreal, **François Houle** studied at McGill University and went on to win the National Debut competition and to complete his studies at Yale University. He has been an artist-in-residence at the Banff Centre for the Arts in for two years, and at the Civitella Ranieri Foundation in Umbria, Italy in 2005. Now based in Vancouver, François is a leader in the city's music community and is considered by many to be Canada's leading exponent of the clarinet.


A West Coast Music Awards and Juno Awards nominee, François has released more than a dozen recordings of his own music on Canadian labels such as Drip Audio, Spool, Songlines, Red Toucan, as well as Germany's between-the-lines label. His CD "Dice Thrown" with French pianist Benoît Delbecq was awarded "Best Jazz Album of 2002" by France's Jazzman magazine, and in 1998 and 2004 he was listed by Downbeat magazine as "Talent Deserving Wider Recognition."

François tours extensively, appearing in major festivals across Canada, the United States and Europe. In the fall of 2006 he was a featured soloist with the CBC Radio Orchestra, performing Lutoslawski's Dance Preludes and a concerto for the Safa Ensemble, his world music trio with Amir Koushkhani and Sal Ferreras. He is currently working on a new commission to compose a concerto for clarinet, to be premiered in November by the Turning Point Ensemble.

François' clarinet playing transcends the stylistic borders associated with his instrument, whether he's playing Mozart or Messiaen or improvising and embracing live, interactive electronics. Inspired by musical innovators such as Steve Lacy, John Carter, William O. Smith and Evan Parker, he has developed a unique improvisational language, virtuosic and rich with sonic embellishment and technical extensions. As a soloist and chamber musician, he has actively expanded the clarinet's repertoire by commissioning some of today's leading Canadian and international composers and premiering over one hundred new works, including those by John Oliver, Paul Dolden, Bradshaw Pack, Giorgio Magnanensi, and William O. Smith. During the 2005/2006 Season, he premiered new chamber concerti written for him by both John Korsurd and Yannick Plamondon. In November of 2007 he gave the world premiere of his new concerto for clarinet and chamber ensemble, which was commissioned by the Turning Point Ensemble. This new work will be featured on an upcoming release on ATMA Classical record label. In the field of creative music François has performed with Marilyn Crispell, Myra Melford, Ab Baars, Marc Dresser, Georg Gräwe, Joëlle Léandre, Evan Parker, Dave Douglas, Benoît Delbecq, and Michael Moore.

By mastering each of the diverse musical genres he approaches, François demystifies music for his audiences, and has become known as one of today's most engaging and stimulating musicians. Visit François on-line at [www.francoishoule.ca](http://www.francoishoule.ca)

*François Houle is a LeBlanc artist and clinician. He plays LeBlanc design by Backun Legacy clarinets, Backun mouthpieces, bells, and barrels.*



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