

Retirement Celebration Concert for Keith Hamel

Friday, May 23, 2025
Roy Barnett Recital Hall, UBC

Professor Keith Hamel



Keith Hamel is a Professor in the School of Music, and an Associate Researcher at the Institute for Computing, Information and Cognitive Systems (ICICS) at the University of British Columbia. He is retiring from UBC in the spring of 2025 and leaves UBC having taught many of Canada's most outstanding composers over his 38 years of teaching.

Hamel's recent music has focused on the interaction between live performers, computer-controlled electronics, and responsive video. His compositions have been performed by many of the finest soloists and ensembles both in Canada and abroad. He has received commissions from IRCAM (Paris), the Ensemble Intercontemporain, Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, Windsor Symphony Orchestra, Vancouver New Music Ensemble, the Elektra Women's Choir, musica intima, New Music Concerts (Toronto), Hammerhead Consort, Standing Wave, Hard Rubber Orchestra, and from many exceptional performers. He has collaborated closely with pianist Megumi Masaki who has commissioned four interactive works from Hamel and has performed these works all across Canada and in more than a dozen countries around the world.

Dr. Keith Hamel is the former Vice-President of the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM), a former President of the Canadian Music Centre, and a former board member of the Canadian League of Composers. Several of his compositions are available on commercial recordings released by Centrediscs and Redshift Music Society.

Program

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Welcome: Dr. Hedy Law, Acting Director of the School of Music

Michelle Herrewynen, Development Officer

Dr. Bob Pritchard, Professor Emeritus of Music Technology and Composition

Spark and Sizzle for flute, clarinet and interactive video (2020)

Paolo Bortolussi *flute*, Aaron McDonald *clarinet*

Keith Hamel *electronics*

Video Tribute

Megumi Masaki, Professor of Piano, Brandon University

Melt for piano, interactive electronics, and responsive video (2023)

Megumi Masaki *piano*, Keith Hamel *electronics*

Video Tribute

Dr. T. Patrick Carrabré, Professor of Composition and
Director of the Chan Centre for the Performing Arts

Flourish for viola and interactive audio and video (2021)

Ryan Davis *viola*, Keith Hamel *electronics*

~ intermission ~

Dr. Jennifer Butler, Lecturer of Composition

Heroes in the Seaweed (2015)

Paolo Bortolussi *flute*, Aireleen Zhu *cello*, Jane Hayes *piano*, Liz Hamel *narrator*

Keith Hamel *electronics*

Video Tribute

Sean Bickerton, BC Director of the Canadian Music Centre

Piano Games for piano, gesture tracking, interactive electronics and interactive video game (2019)

Megumi Masaki *piano*, Keith Hamel *electronics*

Dr. Dorothy Chang, Professor of Composition

All works composed by Keith Hamel

*Please remember to turn off your phones, and note that photography
and recording are not permitted.*

We are gathered together for this event on the traditional, ancestral territory of the
hən̓d̓əm̓iṇəm̓-speaking Musqueam peoples.

Biographies

Paolo Bortolussi *flute*

Raised in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Paolo Bortolussi has performed throughout North America, Europe, and Asia. As a specialist in contemporary music, Paolo has premiered over 400 solo and chamber works for flute, and has performed with major new music organizations across Canada. Currently principal flutist with the Vancouver Island Symphony (VIS), Paolo has appeared as soloist on multiple occasions with the VIS, the Albany (NY) Symphony Orchestra and the Turning Point Ensemble, and has premiered concerti written for him by Jocelyn Morlock, Aaron Gervais, Ramsey Sadaka, and Dorothy Chang. A graduate of the University of Ottawa and Indiana University, Dr. Bortolussi is a lecturer in flute, chamber music and contemporary music at the University of British Columbia School of Music where he also directs the Contemporary Players Ensemble.

Ryan Davis *viola*

“A violist unlike any other” (Stir Vancouver), Canadian Ryan Davis has swiftly emerged as a singular creative force. Davis commands praise for his presence as a composer-performer under the moniker Radia, unifying his extensive classical training with the inspiration of folk, electronic, and hip-hop music. Named one of “30 Hot Canadian Classical Musicians Under 30” by CBC Music in 2021, Davis was recently appointed as Assistant Professor, Viola, at the University of British Columbia’s School of Music in Vancouver.

Liz Hamel *narrator*

Liz Hamel is a versatile musician, working as a performer, teacher, and as a recording producer. Ms. Hamel has had the privilege of producing for performers such as Mark MacGregor, the Burney Ensemble, Elektra Women’s Choir, Paolo Bortolussi and musica intima. She has produced four CDs for musica intima (ATMA) two of which were nominated for Juno Awards. musica intima’s fourth CD, *Into Light*, won a Western Canada Music Award for best classical CD. As an instrumentalist (baroque recorder) Liz has performed with the Pacific Baroque Orchestra, the Burney ensemble, the CBC Radio Orchestra, and Early Music Vancouver. As a singer, she has been member of Accentus Chamber Choir (Paris), the Vancouver Chamber Choir, and musica intima. Since 2014 Liz has focused on her work as an ordained priest in the Anglican church of Canada. She is married to Keith.

Jane Hayes *piano*

As a founding member of Vancouver’s Turning Point Ensemble and Yarilo Contemporary Music Ensemble, Jane’s passion for contemporary music has been nourished. Touring activities with these groups have included concerts across Canada, Europe and the Pacific Rim. Recording projects have included solo piano works by Barbara Pentland and commemorative CDs for the late Canadian composers John Burke and Nikolai Korndorf released in 2022. The Korndorf CD was placed on CBC’s Top 22 Recordings of 2022.

Aaron McDonald *clarinet*

Aaron McDonald is a clarinetist based out of Vancouver, B.C. He is currently pursuing his Doctorate of Musical Arts under the guidance of Professor Jose Franch-Ballester. He has received degrees from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music as well as the University of Kansas. He focuses on chamber music and has performed as a chamber musician across the world. In his free time, he likes to hike and play tennis.

Megumi Masaki *piano*

Megumi Masaki is a Japanese-Canadian pianist and multimedia performing artist recognized as a leading interpreter of new music, and an innovator that reimagines the piano, pianist and performance space. Her work pushes boundaries of interactivity between sound, image, text and movement in multimedia works through new technologies. 82 compositions have been created with/for Megumi and she has premiered 180 works in over 25 countries. Megumi was appointed to the Order of Manitoba and Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada.

For 40 years, Keith Hamel has been a profound force of inspiration and innovation in interactive multimedia, shaping the landscape of contemporary performance through his visionary research, teaching, and collaborations. For the past 14 years, Keith has been Megumi's major research and performing partner. His pioneering work has continually challenged and enriched her artistry with boundless possibilities, and redefined the synergy between performer, creator, and technology. www.megumimasaki.com

Aireleen Zhu *cello*

Aireleen holds a Bachelor of Music degree from the University of British Columbia, and she is currently pursuing her master's degree under the guidance of Professor Janet Steinberg and Eric Wilson.

As a soloist, she has performed with Richmond Delta Youth Orchestra and Vancouver Philharmonic Orchestra. As an orchestral player, she has performed with Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, Vancouver Metropolitan Orchestra, National Youth Orchestra of Canada, Lagom Music Society, and National Youth Orchestra of China.

Program Notes

Spark and Sizzle for flute, clarinet and interactive video was written in 2020 for Paolo Bortolussi and José Franch-Ballester. It is a lively, energetic, and spirited piece with lots of close, interlocking musical gestures between the two instruments. The sounds produced by each instrument generate graphics which respond to the volumes and frequencies being played. The graphics are intended to mimic the playful interplay between the two instruments. Tonight's performance is by Paolo Bortolussi on flute and Aaron McDonald on clarinet.

Melt for piano, interactive electronics, and responsive video was written for Megumi Masaki in 2023. This composition is part of Megumi's Hearing Ice Project which is focused on the climate crisis, and specifically on the melting of glaciers and ice fields in northern countries such as Canada. In *Melt*, a visual representation of a stylized ice field is affected by the piano sounds. This symbolizes the impact that humans are having on our environment. The words that appear on the screen are from the climate activist Greta Thunberg who voices the frustration that many of us feel about our inability or unwillingness to take this crisis seriously. While other current events may have shifted to the forefront of our anxieties, it is the climate crisis that still poses the greatest danger to our collective futures.

Flourish for viola and interactive audio and video was written in 2021 for violist Marina Thibeault. The visual images depict stylized stems, roots, grass and flowers that respond and react to the sounds produced by the viola. In essence, the viola is drawing images that expand and bloom on the screen. The electroacoustic processing in *Flourish* is quite subtle and serves to gently stretch and enhance the viola's sound. Tonight 's performance features Ryan Davis on viola.

***Heroes in the Seaweed*, for narrator, flute, cello and piano**, was commissioned by the Nu:BC ensemble in 2015. The composition pays homage to Canadian poet and songwriter Leonard Cohen—an artist whose songs, poetry and prose I have loved and admired for many years. In this composition, text and audio fragments from Cohen’s works complement and juxtapose the instrumental parts, which are constantly transformed by digital sound processors running on the computer. Like some of Cohen’s prose, the composition often feels of a collage, sometimes shifting dramatically from one idea to another and sometimes transforming subtly and delicately. Many thanks to Liz Hamel who recorded most of the texts (and is the narrator in tonight’s performance), to Julia Nolan who provided some additional layers of text, and, of course, to Leonard Cohen for his beautifully evocative words and music.

***Piano Games* for piano, gesture tracking, interactive electronics and interactive video game** was commissioned by Megumi Masaki in 2019. In this work, the pianist, in addition to performing on her instrument and having sounds enhanced through digital audio processing, is also controlling a video game. The video game responds to the sounds of the piano and the positions of the hands on the keyboard. Within the game, the player can explore and interact with a variety of environments—some are in outer space and are hostile, and others are more colorful and evocative graphical worlds. At times, the pianist can make physical gestures with her hands to interact with the visual world. *Piano Games* represents a new kind of art form that merges the worlds of live music performance, interactive computer music, and video games. The listener is transported to a variety of worlds, some elegant and relaxed, and others more hostile and haunting.

Honour Dr. Bob Pritchard and Dr. Keith Hamel's Legacy

To honour the legacies of Dr. Bob Pritchard and Dr. Keith Hamel, pioneers in music technology at UBC, we invite you to support the **Dr. Bob Pritchard and Dr. Keith Hamel Award in Music Technology and New Media**.

For decades, Dr. Pritchard and Dr. Hamel mentored numerous students and helped establish the UBC School of Music as a respectable program in the field of music technology. Their courses—distinct at the UBC School of Music for their interdisciplinary approach—brought together students from Music, Arts, Science, and Engineering to explore the intersection of organized sound and technology. Through hands-on experiences, they empowered students with the skills and confidence to reimagine the possibilities of music and performance.

Impact of Your Support

Students pursuing music technology often face significant financial barriers beyond tuition, books, and accommodation. The cost of specialized software, digital equipment, instruments, and performance attire can be prohibitive—limiting access to creative exploration and growth, particularly in fast-evolving fields like media arts and technology.

A new award in music technology and new media will provide students with the incentive to explore the field of music technology according to their interests, take creative risks, access the necessary tools to bring otherwise bold ideas to fruition, and—importantly—to open up new horizons for future pursuits. Your support is a catalyst for their success.

Make your gift today and help future artists thrive in the space Bob and Keith helped shape. To make your donation go even further, the first **\$5,000 in gifts will be matched** by Bob and Keith, doubling your impact.

For any questions or further details, please contact:
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