

Beverley Johnston, O.C.
percussion
(Long bio - 1300 words)

Canadian percussionist Beverley Johnston is internationally recognized for her dynamic performances on marimba and percussion. Her exciting performances have been distinguished as unconventional, effectively combining classical transcriptions, contemporary music, and a touch of theatre. She has captivated audiences across North America and overseas with her personal charm and her unique style. In 2024 she was appointed an Officer of the Order of Canada and was also inducted into the Percussive Arts Society Hall of Fame.

Her performances and recordings have been broadcast on radio networks all over the world. She has released seven solo recordings: *The Spirit and the Dust* (2020, Centrediscs), *Garden of Delights* (CD Baby re-release available online), *Woman Runs with Wolves* (2013, Centrediscs) *Ming* (2009, Centrediscs); *Alternate Currents* (1992, Centrediscs); *Marimbach* (1989, CBC Records Musica Viva); and *Impact* (1986, Centrediscs, JUNO nominee). She can also be heard as soloist or chamber musician on numerous other recordings.

Ms. Johnston has travelled the world performing at several different percussion festivals in the United States, Europe and Asia including the Ivan Bilic Marimba Week in Croatia (2017), The International Katarzyna Mycka Marimba Academy in Europe (2013, 2015, 2023), the Shenyang International Percussion Festival in China (2010), The International Marimba Festival and Conference in Minneapolis, USA (2010), The Zeltsman Marimba Festival in USA (2005, 2009, 2013), the Percussive Arts Society International Convention (1988, 1995, 2006, 2009, 2014, 2022), the Stockholm International Percussion Event (1998) and the Journee de la Percussions in Paris, France (1999). The Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity invited her to be a faculty member in the fall of 2016 where she performed the world premiere of Dinuk Wijeratne's multi-movement marimba solo *The Spirit and the Dust*. She was also invited in 2024 to the Banff Centre

as a faculty member where she was involved with teaching, ensemble coaching and performances.

In the past two decades, Ms. Johnston has also maintained an active schedule of concerto and recital appearances across North America and abroad, premiering Canadian concerti (by Patrick Cardy, Chan Ka Nin, Omar Daniel, Alice Ho, Christos Hatzis, Gary Kulesha, Larysa Kuzmenko, (to name a few) along with concerto performances of works by Tan Dun (*Water Concerto*), Maki Ishii (*Afro-Concerto*) and James MacMillan (*Veni, Veni Emmanuel*). She has made several repeat performances with Music in the Morning, Vancouver New Music Society, the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra, the Winnipeg New Music Festival, the Guelph Spring Festival, the Festival of the Sound, the Stratford Summer Music Festival, the Ottawa Chamber Music Festival, Ottawa's Music and Beyond festival and Scotia Music Festival. In 2022 she was a featured soloist with the Ottawa based group Thirteen Strings.

In 2009 she was involved in the successful Zeltsman 'Intermediate Masterworks for Marimba' Project and in the same year was given the distinction of becoming an Ambassador of the Canadian Music Centre in honour of her exemplary commitment to the performance of Canadian composers.

She has performed several works by world-renowned Canadian composer Christos Hatzis which have been written expressly for her including the world premiere of *Pyrrichean Dances* for percussion, viola, and string orchestra and *Tongues of Fire* for solo percussion and orchestra along with solo works for marimba and audio playback which Bev has championed all over the world. Perhaps the most popular and still frequently performed work written expressly for Beverley is Hatzis' work called *Fertility Rites* for marimba and audio playback.

Beverley enjoys collaborating with other musicians and has performed several concerts with the Amici Chamber Ensemble, the Penderecki String Quartet, The Blue Rider Ensemble, The Art of

Time Ensemble, violinist Marc Djokic, flautist Susan Hoeppner, TorQ Percussion Quartet, NEXUS and the Joint Venture Percussion Duo.

Ms. Johnston has been featured in several important interviews and documentaries including being one of the hosts for the CBC radio show “This is my Music” in 2016 and 2024, featured guest for percussionist Casey Cangelosi’s popular internet podcasts (2017), Aldo Mazza’s percussion podcast called ‘Shaping your Journey’ (2022) and has had feature articles in DRUM! Magazine (*Beverley Johnston: A Champion of New, Genre-Busting Works* by David A. Brensilver; March, 2015) and Percussive Notes (*Finding Her Voice: An Interview with Beverley Johnston* by Nathan Daughtrey; September, 2014). She was also the subject of an hour-long documentary on CBC Television’s nationally broadcast *Sunday Arts and Entertainment* (1995). Her performance on this program was nominated for a GEMINI Award in the category of “Best Performance in a Performing Arts Program”.

She has performed as chamber musician and/or soloist in major concert halls all over the world sharing her love of Canadian percussion repertoire. At the 1994 Guelph Spring Festival she performed the world premiere of Michael Colgrass’ outstanding work *Te Tuma Te Papa* with subsequent international performances by her. Within this multi-movement work, was a movement for prepared piano!

Among Beverley’s other performing interests, she has been keen in developing her passion for performance collaborations, which has included the combination of dance, movement, art and theatre. From the 1990s to the present, she has worked with such organizations as New Music Concerts, Arraymusic, Urge (the women’s collective), the Blue Rider Ensemble, Valerie Kuinka’s Collaborations series, Winnipeg’s performance artist/pianist/composer Diana McIntosh, The Peggy Baker Dance Project and has worked with renowned theatre/opera director Richard Armstrong and television/theatre directors Joanna McIntyre and George Bloomfield . One of her highlights in 1998 was working with composer Peter Hatch, costume designers Steve Topping and Aniko Fenyvesi and choreographer Bill James to create a solo dance/music work titled *Psionic*

Interference where she played small percussion instruments attached to her costume. She has been involved with the multi-disciplinary project entitled *Frankenstein's Ghosts* with the Blue Rider Ensemble and choreographer/director Michael Montanaro. Amongst her recent commissions have been a work by David Occhipinti for voice and keyboard percussion called *Clockwork Cummings*. This work stretched the boundaries of what is possible when combining voice and percussion. She also commissioned a new work by young, creative composer Holly Winter called *wild with the music of color* based on the artistic life of visual artist Georgia O'Keeffe. This intriguing piece included a paper dress designed by costume/set designer Denyse Karn.

On International Women's Day 2022 Beverley performed a one-woman show titled *Finding HER Voice* with world premieres of works by Holly Winter and Christos Hatzis along with works by Norbert Palej, Alice Ping Yee Ho and Frederic Rzewski. All the works on this program paid homage to iconic historic and mythological female figures including Mother Earth, Baba Yaga, Eris, Yoko Ono and Georgia O'Keeffe.

In 2023 Beverley premiered many new works by Canadian composers. Some of them include the world premiere of 'Ice Woman' for flute and vibraphone/voice by Alice Ho for the 21C Festival in Toronto, a new work by Michael Pepa for flute, percussion and piano along with a recording of Canadian chamber music works with ICOT (Iranian-Canadian Composers of Toronto).

Beverley's interest in music outreach programs for the past 25 years is reflected in her performances of hundreds of school concerts both as a soloist and with the Toronto Percussion Ensemble.

As a younger professional freelance musician, for many years Beverley worked as extra percussionist with Toronto's National Ballet Orchestra, Canadian Opera Company Orchestra, Toronto Symphony Orchestra along with other local freelance orchestras. She also was involved with numerous studio sessions for film and television.

Bev's love of teaching is apparent in her ongoing support of her students at the University of Toronto where she has been teaching since 1996. Her holistic approach allows the students to find their musical passions whilst maintaining a disciplined practice schedule for improvement and growth in a creative environment.

Beverley Johnston received her training at Vanier College in her native Montreal and studied with Russell Hartenberger at the University of Toronto. She currently lives in rural Ontario with her husband, composer Christos Hatzis.

Beverley is a Marimba One and Paiste Artist.

For more information, please visit her on Facebook and at www.beverleyjohnston.com.