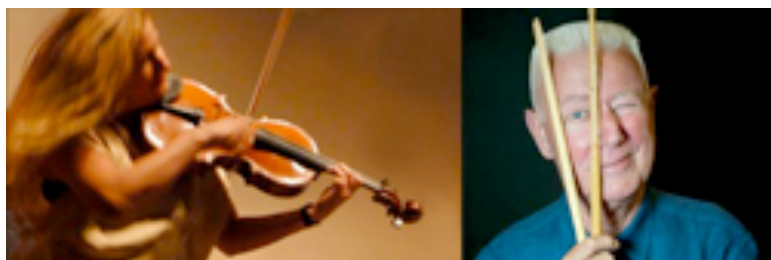


Review**Mary Oliver & Han Bennink
at Transformer Station (January 22)**

by Mike Telin



In an interview with this publication prior to her performance with legendary drummer Han Bennink, violinist Mary Oliver said that she was certain about one thing: “[the audience] will have a good time, I’m fairly confident about that.” And on

Wednesday, January 22 as part of CMA Concerts at Transformer Station, Oliver and Bennink, delivered on that promise.

Oliver and Bennink, who performed under the name duo ICP (Instant Composers Project) are two of the leading performers in the worlds of new music, free improvisation and avant-garde jazz. Born in Zaandam, Netherlands in 1942, Han Bennink is universally admired for his musical abilities that span the entire spectrum of jazz. In 1967 Bennink co-founded ICP along with Dutch pianist Misha Mengelberg. La Jolla, California native Mary Oliver has received acclaim for her premieres of works by composers such as John Cage, Richard Barrett, Brian Ferneyhough, and Iannis Xenakis. A gifted improviser, Oliver has been described as “a rarity in the ranks of first-rate classical interpreters.”

From the beginning Oliver and Bennink had the sizable crowd eating out of their hands. When Bennink dropped the cymbals on the floor, was that...? No, I think it was intended. Pushing the chair across the floor, hitting the drum sticks inside his mouth, Bennink was like the child trying to get the attention of Oliver, the adult, who was improvising on the violin. Then nothing. Silence. Was it over? “We were just tuning the room” Bennink said with a grin.

For slightly over 50 minutes the performers time and again exhibited their outstanding musicianship in composed, improvised and partially composed works by Mengelberg, Oliver, Herbie Nichols, Duke Ellington and Steve Lacey. Mengelberg’s *Habanera* consists of fairly traditional writing for the violin whilst Bennink produced not-so-of-ten-heard sounds by putting his foot on top of the snare drum and ending the piece with a very traditional marching band riff on the snare.

Herbie Nichols’s *Change of Season* brought out a more subtle side of duo ICP. Oliver, now plying viola, produced beautifully voiced chords while Bennink whistled. The work also gave Oliver the opportunity to show off her prowess for extended techniques.

By the concert's conclusion, Bennink had pretty much struck anything in the room that could be struck in order to produce a sound. He also offered up a sizable portion of Dutch humor. Contrast that to Oliver's more quiet way of speaking and commanding technique coupled with classy musical sensibilities, and this was a concert for the memory bank.

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